

An undercurrent in Umno grows against Shahrizat over cattle scandal
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 2 — When Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil closed the Wanita Umno general assembly on Wednesday, it appeared as if she had successfully deflected blame from herself over the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) controversy.

But it is believed that the cheers from the standing ovation that greeted her were mixed with silent jeers of disgust from the senior minister's detractors, many of whom are rallying for her resignation.

Speaking to The Malaysian Insider after the assembly, several senior Wanita leaders said Shahrizat (picture) had become a "liability" to Umno and should exit the limelight before the NFC scandal "destroys us all".

But they said most delegates were "too afraid" to speak against their chief for fear of losing their posts in the party.

"She (Shahrizat) is using Wanita Umno to protect her but the issue (NFC) is not a Wanita (Umno) issue but a personal one involving her and her family.

"As a Wanita Umno member, I am very disappointed. A lot of us are disappointed... why drag Umno into this issue?" said one Wanita Umno delegate from Perak.

She added that she had remained seated when the sea of red-clad delegates rose to applaud Shahrizat during her winding-up speech.

She said Shahrizat should have explained the issue to delegates instead of fishing for support by claiming the scandal was merely a ploy by the opposition to weaken Wanita Umno.

"Do not forget, the first person to expose the issue about NFC's weaknesses was the Auditor-General, not the opposition. So why attack the opposition to hide your own weakness?" she pointed out.

Shahrizat has been making headlines in recent weeks over the NFC controversy after its operations, run by a company owned by her husband, were described in the Auditor-General's Report for 2010 as being "in a mess".

But instead of explaining the issue, the minister chose instead to deflect blame from her by saying it had nothing to do with her. She also countered the opposition's calls for her resignation by calling on PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to quit.

Shahrizat reportedly earned wild support from members during her speech, with one Kelantan Umno leader even calling the opposition "cattle" for raising the NFC scandal.

"But a lot of Wanita Umno members do not know the issue of the NFC... that is why they rose to support her. They do not know the issue.

"Wanita Umno, they are all like that," the Perak delegate said with a sigh.

A senior Wanita Umno leader even advised The Malaysian Insider to "speak in private" to party delegates, many of whom she said would agree that Shahrizat should face the music for her alleged involvement in the NFC.

"Come on, they understand. It is your husband, so what do you mean it has nothing to do with you? If you were not a minister do you think your husband would have gotten the project?"

"Who knows him from Adam?" she said.

Asked if Shahrizat was now viewed as a "liability" to Umno, both leaders agreed.

"Of course she is. Some are saying to PM — please do not have the election after the Chinese New Year because this NFC issue will not die... it will not be forgotten within this one or two months.

"Some of us are so worried."

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